



**Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
Commission on Colleges**

REPORT OF THE REAFFIRMATION COMMITTEE

Statement Regarding the Report

The Board of Trustees of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) is responsible for making the final determination on reaffirmation of accreditation based on the findings contained in this committee report, the institution's response to issues contained in the report, other assessments relevant to the review, and application of the Commission's policies and procedures. Final interpretation of the Principles of Accreditation and final action on the accreditation status of the institution rest with SACSCOC Board of Trustees.

Name of the Institution: Florida Gulf Coast University

Date of the Review: March 31-April 2, 2015

COC Staff Member: Dr. Nuria M. Cuevas

**Chair of the Committee: Dr. Charles D. Whitlock - CHAIR
President Emeritus
Eastern Kentucky University**

Part I. Overview and Introduction to the Institution

Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) is a member of the State University System of Florida (comprising 12 institutions), and is a relatively new (currently in its 18th year of operation), growing institution of higher learning. Situated on 760 acres in Southwest Florida, FGCU opened for students in August of 1997 as Florida's tenth State University. The principal service area for the University is the immediate five-county region comprising Lee, Collier, Charlotte, Glades, and Hendry counties, home to approximately 1,000,000 residents but FGCU is also attracting students more broadly from across South Florida. FGCU offers a competitive admissions process that is guided by state law and is intended to provide equal opportunity for admission to all qualified prospective students. The institution exhibits a strong commitment to environmental sustainability and to civic engagement, which were the focus of its original Quality Enhancement Plan.

In its brief history, FGCU has shown remarkable growth. Simply stated, FGCU has been the fastest growing University in the State University System of Florida. Enrollment has more than quintupled since opening day (2,584) in fall 1997 to 14,469 students in fall 2014, with students from 45 states, including the District of Columbia, and more than 85 countries. The number of residential students living in university housing has grown from 200 in 1998 to more than 4,700 today. The University also has become increasingly diverse from 12.6% minority students to 30% minority today. From just 49 degrees awarded in its first year, FGCU now awards over 2200 degrees annually and, first-year retention rates have improved from 43% to 78% today. Its peer institutions are those public institutions that fall into the Master's large Carnegie classification.

The Reaffirmation Committee very much appreciated the hospitality and responsiveness of the entire Florida Gulf Coast University community. A special thank you is extended from the committee to Dr. Paul Snyder, Senior Associate Provost and Associate Vice President, Ms. Lenore Benefield, Director, Assessment and Accreditation Management Systems, Kristen Vanselow, Assistant Director, Program Review, Accreditation, and Strategic Planning, Ms. Jacqueline Toth, Administrative Liaison, Planning and Institutional Performance, Mr. C.J. McFarland, Multimedia Support Coordinator, and Mr. John Wilson, Academic and Event Technical Coordinator. These individuals left no stone unturned in meeting the committee's every need for information and access to individuals. Appreciation is also extended to Mr. Luis Fernandez, our driver with Dolphin Transportation Specialists who chauffeured us with grace, courtesy and safety. The tone of an institution is set in large measure by its leadership. The committee recognizes that President Wilson Bradshaw's openness and transparency helped create an environment in which it was very easy for the committee to do its work.

Part II. Assessment of Compliance

A. Assessment of Compliance with Section 1: The Principle of Integrity

1.1 The institution operates with integrity in all matters. (Integrity)

The Reaffirmation Committee found that the institution operated with integrity in all areas reviewed.

B. Assessment of Compliance with Section 2: Core Requirements

- 2.1** The institution has degree-granting authority from the appropriate government agency or agencies. **(Degree-granting authority)**

The institution documents degree granting authority by constitutional and legislative authorization. This legal authority also empowers the governing authority of the State University System's Board of Governors and the University's own Board of Trustees.

- 2.2** The institution has a governing board of at least five members that is the legal body with specific authority over the institution. The board is an active policy-making body for the institution and is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the financial resources of the institution are adequate to provide a sound educational program. The board is not controlled by a minority of board members or by organizations or interests separate from it. Both the presiding officer of the board and a majority of other voting members of the board are free of any contractual, employment, or personal or familial financial interest in the institution.

A military institution authorized and operated by the federal government to award degrees has a public board on which both the presiding officer and a majority of the other members are neither civilian employees of the military nor active/retired military. The board has broad and significant influence upon the institution's programs and operations, plays an active role in policy-making, and ensures that the financial resources of the institution are used to provide a sound educational program. The board is not controlled by a minority of board members or by organizations or interests separate from the board except as specified by the authorizing legislation. Both the presiding officer of the board and a majority of other voting board members are free of any contractual, employment, or personal or familial financial interest in the institution. **(Governing board)**

Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU), a Florida public non-military institution of higher education operates under the authority of the Statewide Board of Governors (Board of Governors for the State University System (SUS) of Florida), which was established by the Constitution of the State of Florida. The Constitution has determined that the Statewide Board of Governors shall "operate, regulate, control, and be fully responsible for the management of the whole university system" (FL Const. Art. IX, Section 7(d)). Each institution shall have local Boards of Trustees consisting of thirteen members, "dedicated to the purposes of the state university system" (FL Const. Art. IX, Section 7(c)).

The Reaffirmation Committee reviewed the appropriate sections of the Florida Constitution, Florida Statutes documents, the Florida Code of Ethics, various board minutes, organizational structure document, standing committees of the University Board of Trustees, conflict of interest policies of FGCU and Florida Statute, and the evaluation process and copies of the President's evaluation. The established legislative structure of the FGCU Board of Trustees should eliminate the control of the board by a minority of board members, by other organizations or by separate interests.

Copies of all Board of Trustees Members' Conflict of Interest Statements were provided and reviewed by the Committee and all members report being free of any contractual or employment interests of the University. However, Individual members of the Board are governed by the provisions of Chapter 112, Part III, Florida Statutes, and the Code of Ethics for Public Officers and Employees (pp. 56-117) and ethics training is provided to each board member.

The Board, by state statute, is appropriately engaged in policy-making and to ensure the financial resources are used to provide a sound educational program.

- 2.3** The institution has a chief executive officer whose primary responsibility is to the institution and who is not the presiding officer of the board. (*See the Commission policy "Core Requirement 2.3: Documenting an Alternate Approach."*) **(Chief executive officer)**

Details of Presidential (Chief Executive) authority are well-defined by University Board of Trustees Bylaws. The institution's president reports to the Trustees. Presidential authority and responsibilities are broad, well-documented, and well-defined.

- 2.4** The institution has a clearly defined, comprehensive, and published mission statement that is specific to the institution and appropriate for higher education. The mission addresses teaching and learning and, where applicable, research and public service. **(Institutional mission)**

The current FGCU mission was originally adopted by the University Board of Trustees in 2002. After institutional review, a revision was made and approved by the Trustees on January 19, 2010.

The mission is clearly defined, appropriate to higher education, and addresses the aspects of teaching, learning, and public service that are important to the institution. Within its three paragraphs, it also includes areas that make the institution distinctive and expand upon the traditional educational experience.

- 2.5** The institution engages in ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide research-based planning and evaluation processes that (1) incorporate a systematic review of institutional mission, goals, and outcomes; (2) result in continuing improvement in institutional quality; and (3) demonstrate the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission. **(Institutional effectiveness)**

The institution's process of institutional assessment includes the Strategic Plan, Unit-Based Annual Reports, the President's Goals, the President's Annual Evaluation, the FGCU Annual Report to the Florida Board of Governors, and the FGCU Work Plan for the Florida Board of Governors.

In 2009, the President charged the Planning and Budget Council (PBC) with updating the University Strategic Plan. The process for institutional review has an annual cycle that includes all components including the mission, goals and objectives as well as benchmarks and accomplishments.

The PBC coordinates the six continuous improvement teams as part of implementing the strategic plan. One of these is the Strategic Planning and Institutional Effectiveness Committee (SPIEC). Supporting these six standing

committees are institutional committees and councils (Faculty Senate, SGA, Staff Advisory Council, Student Affairs, Administration, etc.).

The SPIEC includes cross-campus representation and review of the success of the planning efforts, solicits new proposed actions to achieve goals annually, and makes recommendations to the PBC to update the strategic plan on a yearly basis.

The institution submits an annual report to the Board of Governors that demonstrates goal attainment. Presidential goals included within the President's annual evaluation (submitted to the Board of Trustees) provide target performance and improvement on select goals. Each organizational unit reports goals aligned with the institutional strategic plan. The unit annual report documents metrics, performance, and resulting improvements. A Work Plan is also submitted to the Board of Governors that includes strategies, metrics, funding allocation, facility plans, etc. The Work Plan is reviewed by the University Board of Trustees annually.

The Budget Committee helps establish projected revenues and funding priorities that are recommended to the PBC for consideration.

2.6 The institution is in operation and has students enrolled in degree programs. **(Continuous operation)**

Florida Gulf Coast University was established in 1996 and in 2013-2014 was approved to offer 51 baccalaureate, 27 masters, 2 doctoral programs (Ed.D., D.P.T and a transitional t-D.P.T, the latter a subset of the full D.P.T curriculum for licensed practitioners) and six post-baccalaureate certificate programs. The institution has awarded 2,410 associate's degrees, 15,678 baccalaureate, 3,957 master's, 42 education specialist degrees and 65 doctoral degrees. Since 2002 the institution has grown from 5,258 students to 14,074 in 2013. The institution has demonstrated that it has been in continuous operation since 1996 and has students continuously enrolled.

2.7.1 The institution offers one or more degree programs based on at least 60 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the associate level; at least 120 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the baccalaureate level; or at least 30 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the post-baccalaureate, graduate, or professional level. If an institution uses a unit other than semester credit hours, it provides an explanation for the equivalency. The institution also provides a justification for all degrees that include fewer than the required number of semester credit hours or its equivalent unit. **(Program length)**

FGCU's associate degree programs meet but do not exceed (in accordance with state statute) the minimum of 60 semester credit hours, its undergraduate baccalaureate degree programs consist of at least 120 semester credit hours, and its graduate programs are comprised of at least 30 hours each, as documented under individual program information in its undergraduate catalog and FGCU General Graduate Academic Policies for graduate programs. FGCU uses "semester credit hour" as the unit for describing program length.

- 2.7.2** The institution offers degree programs that embody a coherent course of study that is compatible with its stated mission and is based upon fields of study appropriate to higher education. **(Program content)**

FGCU uses a standard template to propose new degree programs. Proposals are provided as examples of completed templates. This common State University System template is used to demonstrate coherence in the course of study by addressing certain activities and program components common to all programs in terms of planning processes, specific expected student learning outcomes, admission standards, program prerequisites, graduation requirements, curricular framework for the proposed program, including number of credit hours and composition of core courses, restricted electives, thesis requirements, sequenced courses of study and curriculum delivery. Professional or discipline-specific accreditation of FGCU programs, as well as a requirement that program reviews include external reviewers, ensures that major program requirements conform to commonly accepted standards and practices.

- *2.7.3** In each undergraduate degree program, the institution requires the successful completion of a general education component at the collegiate level that (1) is a substantial component of each undergraduate degree, (2) ensures breadth of knowledge, and (3) is based on a coherent rationale. For degree completion in associate programs, the component constitutes a minimum of 15 semester hours or the equivalent; for baccalaureate programs, a minimum of 30 semester hours or the equivalent. These credit hours are to be drawn from and include at least one course from each of the following areas: humanities/fine arts, social/behavioral sciences, and natural science/mathematics. The courses do not narrowly focus on those skills, techniques, and procedures specific to a particular occupation or profession. If an institution uses a unit other than semester credit hours, it provides an explanation for the equivalency. The institution also provides a justification if it allows for fewer than the required number of semester credit hours or its equivalent unit of general education courses. **(General education)**

The Institution requires 36 credit hours of General Education Requirements for all majors. A major at FGCU requires between 120 and 129 semester credit hours. The articulation of courses among institutions of higher education in Florida assures the equivalency of General Education courses across the state. This articulation (Rule 6A10.024 (3), Florida Administrative Code) determines that all General Education Requirements be equivalent across institutions. The transcripts of students who did not complete their General Education Requirements in Florida are evaluated at FCGU by faculty in specific areas and by the Director of General Education to identify equivalencies that may be used to meet these requirements. The breadth of knowledge is assured by requiring that General Education courses cover information across five different areas: Written Communication, Mathematics, Humanities, Social Sciences and Natural Sciences. The humanities component has a literature component.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed documents such as the Academic Catalog and Departmental Curriculum Maps and conducted interviews with the Provost confirming that the institution's 36-hour General Education Program (Communication - 6 hours, Mathematics - 6 hours, Humanities - 9 hours, Social Sciences - 6-9 hours, Natural Sciences - 6-9 hours) is required for

all students in all College's and Schools in support of the institution's case for compliance and affirms the finding of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

- 2.7.4** The institution provides instruction for all course work required for at least one degree program at each level at which it awards degrees. If the institution does not provide instruction for all such course work and (1) makes arrangements for some instruction to be provided by other accredited institutions or entities through contracts or consortia or (2) uses some other alternative approach to meeting this requirement, the alternative approach must be approved by the Commission on Colleges. In both cases, the institution demonstrates that it controls all aspects of its educational program. (See the Commission policy "Core Requirement 2.7.4: Documenting an Alternate Approach.") **(Course work for degrees)**

The institution provides instruction for all the courses required in all its programs, with the exception of clinical rotations that must be completed in specific clinical sites. The institution provides examples of transcripts at all levels of instruction, including a transcript from Nursing, which is a program that requires clinical rotations. These rotations at clinical sites are specifically noted as such in the transcript.

- *2.8** The number of full-time faculty members is adequate to support the mission of the institution and to ensure the quality and integrity of each of its academic programs. **(Faculty)**

FGCU determines adequacy of full-time faculty numbers by program on the basis of statistical analysis associated with a growth-planning model; comparative data; peer review; faculty credentials and faculty professional development; and student feedback. While the State University System average percentage of all undergraduate credit hours taught by full-time faculty in a recent comparison year was 68 percent, it was 81 percent for FGCU. Comparison with accreditation standards, where available, and feedback provided from the state-mandated seven-year academic program review process inform needed increases by program. With regard to distance education, DL sections offered during a recent semester by full-time faculty were at 88 percent. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed the documentation provided in the Compliance Certification, interviewed the Provost, and concurs with the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

- 2.9** The institution, through ownership or formal arrangements or agreements, provides and supports student and faculty access and user privileges to adequate library collections and services and to other learning/information resources consistent with the degrees offered. Collections, resources, and services are sufficient to support all its educational, research, and public service programs. **(Learning resources and services)**

Focusing on access to adequate and sufficient collections, resources and services, the narrative for this Core Requirement demonstrates that the collections, resources, and services provided by the library are adequate and sufficient to support FGCU's educational, research, and public service programs.

An expanded library facility, increase in the materials budget for FY13/14, diverse and equally robust portfolio of front-line services, commitment to improving the

24/7 experience, investment in cooperative resource sharing to shore up the library's resources, and user privileges and support that include a variety of approaches to student learning, are examples of the library's efforts to establish and maintain adequacy and sufficiency. An additional example is the library's approach to collection development and management. Collection assessment through various methods and modes, serves to keep collection development on track. A revised Collection Development Policy alongside redefined liaison librarian roles, faculty input, user-satisfaction surveys, as well as the institution's program development and review processes, inform collection decision-making. Multiple points of discovery, including the web-scale discovery catalog, e-journal portal, subject guides, database locator, and new Digital Library maximize access to the collection.

With regards to library resources and services, it is important to note that the 2013 Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory cited FGCU's library resources and services as an institutional strength. Specifically, and from the narrative, "FGCU students ranked the Library's resources and services in a significantly positive light, with a rank of 5.92 out of a possible 7 in satisfaction, well above FGCU's national peers."

- *2.10** The institution provides student support programs, services, and activities consistent with its mission that are intended to promote student learning and enhance the development of its students. **(Student support services)**

Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) has a wide range of available student support programs, services, and activities that are consistent with the institution's mission, promote student learning, and enhance the development of its students.

To provide academic support, the University offers an easily accessible and comprehensive array of library services; academic advising to all students; retention programs to include supplemental instruction; a writing center; adaptive services for those requiring accommodations; the Student Support Services (TRIO) program, an honors program, and technology resources. To support the student outside the classroom specific services include, Campus Recreation, Career Development Services, Student Media (Eagle News), Multicultural Student Services, New Student Programs, First Year Advising and Eagle View Orientation, Housing and Residence Life, Counseling and Health Services, Adaptive Services, Counseling and Psychological Services, Prevention and Wellness Services, Student Health Services and Testing and Assessment. A review of the University undergraduate catalog as well as its website confirms this level of support.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed documents and websites from various units including the University Catalog, Writing Center, Student Affairs, Financial Aid, Business Technology Services, Library Services, and many more. The Committee also conducted interviews with the Vice President for Student Affairs, Director of the Writing Center, AVP for Academic & Curriculum Support, Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Director of Academic Advising, Director of Enrollment Management LCOB, Director of New Student Programs, Director of Center for Academic Achievement, Director of the Office of Adaptive Services, Director of Counseling & Health Services, Dean of Student Affairs and others in support of the institution's case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

- 2.11.1** The institution has a sound financial base and demonstrated financial stability to support the mission of the institution and the scope of its programs and services.

The member institution provides the following financial statements: (1) an institutional audit (or *Standard Review Report* issued in accordance with *Statements on Standards for Accounting and Review Services* issued by the AICPA for those institutions audited as part of a system-wide or statewide audit) and written institutional management letter for the most recent fiscal year prepared by an independent certified public accountant and/or an appropriate governmental auditing agency employing the appropriate audit (or *Standard Review Report*) guide; (2) a statement of financial position of unrestricted net assets, exclusive of plant assets and plant-related debt, which represents the change in unrestricted net assets attributable to operations for the most recent year; and (3) an annual budget that is preceded by sound planning, is subject to sound fiscal procedures, and is approved by the governing board. **(Financial resources and stability)**

The Institution did not initially provide the required institutional audit or Standard Review Report for the most recent fiscal year ended June 30, 2014. The Institution provided the Fiscal Year 2013 Annual Financial Report and Audit Report. The auditors gave an unqualified opinion on the Fiscal Year 2013 financial statements. The institution has since provided audited financial statements for the 2014 fiscal year. The 2014 financial statements received an unqualified opinion by the auditors.

The Institution provided fiscal years 2014, 2013, 2012, and 2011 annual financial reports and an annual operating budget development and approval process which supports an effective and thoughtful budget planning process that includes accountability over expenditures and appropriate controls. Based on the previous year's comprehensive financial statements that were provided, the Institution has adequate physical and financial resources to support its mission.

- 2.11.2** The institution has adequate physical resources to support the mission of the institution and the scope of its programs and services. **(Physical resources)**

The Institution operates a main campus in Fort Myers, Florida. The main campus is situated on 760 acres and spans 3.7 million square feet. Adequate descriptions of the campus facilities were provided by the Institution. In spring 2013 the Institution completed the Five Year Educational Plant Survey required by the State of Florida. Future project requests are submitted by the Institution in the Five Year Capital Improvement Plan. The Campus Master Plan was prepared and approved by the Board of Trustees in 2012. The Master Plan was developed for the 2010-2020 time period.

Student satisfaction as measured by the Noel-Levitz Satisfaction Inventory denotes positive contribution to educational success and statistically exceeds national levels in the areas of campus maintenance, residence halls and computer labs.

- 2.12** The institution has developed an acceptable Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) that includes an institutional process for identifying key issues emerging from institutional assessment and focuses on learning outcomes and/or the

environment supporting student learning and accomplishing the mission of the institution. **(Quality Enhancement Plan)**

The institution developed an acceptable QEP. See Part III for additional information.

C. Assessment of Compliance with Section 3: Comprehensive Standards

- 3.1.1** The mission statement is current and comprehensive, accurately guides the institution's operations, is periodically reviewed and updated, is approved by the governing board, and is communicated to the institution's constituencies. **(Mission).**

The current FGCU mission was adopted by the University Board of Trustees in 2002. It is periodically reviewed and, after a third institutional review, a revision was made and approved by the Board of Trustees on January 19, 2010.

The mission is clearly defined, comprehensive, appropriate to higher education, and addresses the aspects of teaching, learning, and public service that are important to the institution. Within its three paragraphs, it also includes areas that make the institution distinctive and expand upon the traditional educational experience.

The mission is operationalized in the seven major goals of the University Strategic Plan. The array of programs and services, level of degrees offered, funding allocations, unit goals, etc. provided are guided by the mission and detailed in the strategic plan.

The mission statement is provided in the University catalog and is found on the University's website.

- 3.2.1** The governing board of the institution is responsible for the selection and the periodic evaluation of the chief executive officer. **(CEO evaluation/selection)**

Presidential (CEO) selection resides with the institution's Board of Trustees, by authority granted it by the State's Board of Governors.

- 3.2.2** The legal authority and operating control of the institution are clearly defined for the following areas within the institution's governance structure: **(Governing board control)**

3.2.2.1 The institution's mission

The FGCU Board of Trustees is, by the Florida Constitution, enabling statutes, state Board of Governors' regulations, and its own Bylaws, responsible for the approval of the institution's mission.

3.2.2.2 The fiscal stability of the institution

The FGCU Board of Trustees is, by the Florida Constitution, enabling statutes, state Board of Governors' regulations, and its

own Bylaws, responsible for the approval of the institution's budget through which it accomplishes its mission.

3.2.2.3 Institutional policy

The FGCU Board of Trustees is, by the Florida Constitution, enabling statutes, state Board of Governors' regulations, and its own Bylaws, responsible for the approval of the institution's policies through which it accomplishes its mission. It is the responsibility of the President to enforce institutional policies.

3.2.3 The governing board has a policy addressing conflict of interest for its members. **(Board conflict of interest)**

Both the State and local boards have conflict of interest policies. Individual members of the Board are governed by the provisions of Chapter 112, Part III, Florida Statutes, and the Code of Ethics for Public Officers and Employees (pp. 56-117). A circumstance has not arisen requiring enforcement of the policy.

3.2.4 The governing board is free from undue influence from political, religious, or other external bodies and protects the institution from such influence. **(External influence)**

The Reaffirmation Committee reviewed the Florida Constitution and statutes that relate to eliminating undue influence from political, religious or other external bodies, the FGCU Board of Trustees' own Bylaws and Code of Ethics. Each of these elements comprise in an attempt to eliminate undue external influence. The institution has made every attempt to assure inappropriate influence is eliminated. The committee finds the institution has demonstrated the FGCU Board of Trustees is free of undue political, religious or other external influence.

3.2.5 The governing board has a policy whereby members can be dismissed only for appropriate reasons and by a fair process. **(Board dismissal)**

The Florida Constitution and its Statutes provide the grounds for the dismissal of public officials. Board of Governors' Policy details the means by which a Trustee may be dismissed. The institution has not had an occasion to enforce the policy.

3.2.6 There is a clear and appropriate distinction, in writing and practice, between the policy-making functions of the governing board and the responsibility of the administration and faculty to administer and implement policy. **(Board/administration distinction)**

The Ethics Policy of the Board of Trustees establishes that the Board of Trustees has a policy-making role. The FGCU-PR1.001 Statement of Agency Organization and Operation establishes that the responsibility for administering and implementing policies resides with the institution's President, the administration and the faculty.

3.2.7 The institution has a clearly defined and published organizational structure that delineates responsibility for the administration of policies. **(Organizational structure)**

The institution's organizational structure is well-documented and updated annually in both electronic and print versions.

***3.2.8** The institution has qualified administrative and academic officers with the experience and competence to lead the institution. **(Qualified administrative/academic officers)**

The curricula vitae and job descriptions verify the qualification of individuals holding administrative and academic leadership positions. They have appropriate academic credentials for each position held as well as significant years of experience in higher education.

The documentation provided demonstrates that the University's academic and administrative employees have the background and capabilities needed to perform their duties successfully as institutional leaders. A close review of the resumes provided confirm that the qualifications and years of service of the administrative and academic officers are aligned with the respective duties and responsibilities.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed documentation of the qualifications of academic and administrative officers in support of the institution's case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

3.2.9 The institution publishes policies regarding appointment, employment, and evaluation of all personnel. **(Personnel appointment)**

Florida Gulf Coast University has clear policies concerning hiring and evaluation of employees. The FGCU Search and Screen Guidelines determine the procedures to follow for advertising, recruitment and hiring for new positions. The office of Human Resources coordinates these activities and assures compliance with institutional as well as state policies. The report shows examples of hiring rubrics and faculty evaluations to support the narrative.

3.2.10 The institution periodically evaluates the effectiveness of its administrators. **(Administrative staff evaluations)**

The President is evaluated by the Board of Trustees. Other mid-level administrators are also evaluated annually. The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs meets with and establishes goals for each direct report as part of their annual evaluation.

Department chairs and deans are evaluated by in-unit faculty through use of an online instrument that addresses such areas as: support of teaching and professional development; communications and community engagement; leadership, management, and organization; strategic development and program development; and overall satisfaction with performance. A review of the HR policies attests to this process.

3.2.11 The institution's chief executive officer has ultimate responsibility for, and exercises appropriate administrative and fiscal control over, the institution's intercollegiate athletics program. **(Control of intercollegiate athletics)**

The institution responds to this standard by providing evidence of its compliance with Board of Governors Policy, Board of Trustees Bylaws, and NCAA bylaws, which clearly place the control of intercollegiate athletics with the President (CEO) of the institution.

3.2.12 The institution demonstrates that its chief executive officer controls the institution's fund-raising activities. **(Fund-raising activities)**.

Board of Trustees Bylaws clearly detail ultimate presidential authority with respect to fund-raising activities, and the University's own policies clearly articulate the President's responsibilities with respect to this activity.

3.2.13 For any entity organized separately from the institution and formed primarily for the purpose of supporting the institution or its programs: (1) the legal authority and operating control of the institution is clearly defined with respect to that entity; (2) the relationship of that entity to the institution and the extent of any liability arising out of that relationship is clearly described in a formal, written manner; and (3) the institution demonstrates that (a) the chief executive officer controls any fund-raising activities of that entity or (b) the fund-raising activities of that entity are defined in a formal, written manner which assures that those activities further the mission of the institution. **(Institution-related entities)**

The Institution has two non-affiliated corporate foundations. Each organization has its own Bylaws and Board of Directors/Trustees. Florida state law defines the legal authority, governance structure and operating control of non-affiliated entities.

The Bylaws of each non-affiliated organization establish the purpose, structure and role that support the University and its programs. The Institution's President is a member of each Board and the Executive Director of each organization reports to the President. The Institution exercises adequate control over the organization's affiliates.

3.2.14 The institution's policies are clear concerning ownership of materials, compensation, copyright issues, and the use of revenue derived from the creation and production of all intellectual property. These policies apply to students, faculty, and staff. **(Intellectual property rights)**

FGCU's Intellectual Property Policy describes how the University licenses, protects, and considers contributions of University personnel in the development of intellectual property such as trademarks, copyrights and patents. This policy distinguishes those works that accrue to the author and those that accrue to the University. University supported inventions made in the field or discipline in employee's respective fields, or by using appreciable University support, are the property of the University with proceeds to be shared. With regard to dissemination, information pertaining to the policy is made accessible to the University community through the website of the General Counsel, the University Collective Bargaining Agreement, and the Faculty Resource Guide. Employees may grieve matters regarding intellectual property under the University's general Grievance Regulation, a copy of which is provided in evidence.

3.3.1 The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on

analysis of the results in each of the following areas (**Institutional Effectiveness**):

***3.3.1.1** educational programs, to include student learning outcomes

FGCU identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in its educational programs, to include student learning outcomes. Academic programs at FGCU complete an assessment plan and assessment report, an academic learning compact for all baccalaureate programs as required by the Florida Board of Governors, and a seven-year program review.

In March 2012, the Faculty Senate Outcomes and Assessment Task Force (OATF) created three student learning outcomes to replace the previous nine undergraduate and five graduate student learning outcomes. Each undergraduate and graduate degree program is required to develop measurable student learning outcomes in each of the three areas of communication skills, critical thinking skills, and content/discipline knowledge and skills, as relevant to the student learning needs of that program, undergraduate and graduate. For a sample of programs (including a bachelors in Art, Biology, Communication, Criminal Justice, English, Environmental Studies, and History and a master's in English, Environmental Science, and Public Administration and others), the institution provided clearly defined student learning outcomes, measurement methods, results, use of results to improve program quality, and program review/accreditation improvements. Where appropriate, the institution provided a student performance comparison between online and traditional format courses as well as multiple cycles of assessment.

During the site visit, the Senior Associate Provost and Associate Vice President for Planning and Institutional Performance, the Director of Assessment and Accreditation Management Systems and the Interim Coordinator for Assessment and Accreditation met with the site visitor to explain FGCU's processes for assessment plans, assessment reports and program review. The assessment of student learning outcomes is a major component of all three plans/reports. The institution provided access to the databases for these reports in their Sharepoint software which are managed by the Director of Assessment and Accreditation Management Systems. All academic programs at the University participate in these planning and assessment activities. Accordingly, the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

3.3.1.2 administrative support services

The institution defines administrative support services to include functional units that report to the Vice President for Administrative Services and Finance. Each unit in the institution sets forth annual goals aligned with the unit's mission and the goals of the strategic plan.

Annual reports and assessment tables were provided for Undergraduate Admissions, Police and Parking Services, Finance and Accounting,

Procurement Services, Business Operations, Student Financial Services, Campus Reservations and Records Management, Business Applications, Network Services and Helpdesk, Telecommunications, Environmental Health and Safety, University Budget Office, Physical Plan, and Facilities Planning. Along with the goals, the associated strategies, metrics, results, and improvements are included for all units and reflect a strong institutional commitment to administrative support services assessment.

3.3.1.3 academic and student support services

The institution defines academic and student support services to include functional units that report to 1) the Vice President for Student Affairs and 2) Division of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. Within Student Affairs, this includes Dean of Students, Counseling and Health Services, New Student Programs, Career Development Services, Housing and Residence Life, and Campus Recreation. Within Academic Affairs, this includes Library Services, Academic and Curriculum Support, University Registrar, Undergraduate Studies, The Honors Program, International Services Office and Academic Advising. The Ombuds Office and Office of Internal Audit also provide services to support students directly or indirectly; these functional units report to the Office of the President.

Each unit in the institution provides annual goals aligned with the unit's mission and the goals of the strategic plan. Each unit's goals, assessment measures, results, and use of results for multiple cycles is provided in the Annual Report Unit Goals and the accompanying Unit Goal Outcomes Assessment Summary. Various assessment measures are employed and include normed surveys, internal surveys, quantitative and qualitative measures with the department, as well as external measures of success.

3.3.1.4 research within its mission, if appropriate

The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee found the institution to be in non-compliance on 3.3.1.4, reporting that "Florida Gulf Coast University's (FGCU) mission statement states that 'faculty uphold challenging academic standards and balance research, scholarly activities, and service expectations with their central responsibilities of teaching and mentoring.' Research productivity for the University is assessed annually by the FGCU Board of Trustees and by the Florida Board of Governors. 'The University Board of Trustees and the Board of Governors both track institutional sponsored research and grants activity across all sources with an emphasis on external funding. These are recorded in FGCU's Annual Report to the Board of Governors.'"

"Faculty annual evaluations include a focus on scholarly contributions/scholarship/professional development. Academic programs incorporate research performance as part of their annual goals assessment."

"The University's eleven Institutes and Centers are reviewed annually. This annual report includes goals, objectives, progress made, overall evaluation and recommendations, and next year objectives and

assessments. This report was provided for the Coastal Watershed Institute. A rationale was not provided regarding the representativeness of the sample documentation. Reports for more than one Institute or Center are needed in order to demonstrate that the institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which the outcomes are achieved, and uses results for the purpose of improvement for its research centers and institutes as research is a significant part of the institution's mission."

At the time of the site visit by the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee, FGCU had nine research institutes/centers housed within the Lutgert College of Business and the College of Arts and Sciences. Annual reports were provided in the *Focused Report FGCU 2015* for six of the nine research institutes/centers. Annual Reports for the other three institutes/centers were presented at the site visit by the Institute for Youth and Justice Studies, Institute for Technological Innovation and Lucas Institute for Real Estate Development and Finance. These were reviewed by the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee which determined the institution is in compliance with the standard.

3.3.1.5 community/public service within its mission, if appropriate

The University's mission states that "faculty uphold challenging academic standards and balance research, scholarly activities, and service expectations with their central responsibilities of teaching and mentoring." The institution includes financial and resource contributions from service learning, Small Business Development Center, Regional Economic Research Institute, Continuing Education as well as community engagement through faculty, staff and students.

Community/public service or civic engagement for the University is assessed on an annual basis by the FGCU Board of Trustees and by the Florida Board of Governors. The Board of Trustees sets goals for the President each year related to the community engagement mission of the University and the President reports back progress.

For areas such as Continuing Education and off-campus programs, annual reports provide the goals, degree of attainment, and use of data. Each Continuing Education goal was outlined in the narrative. Multiple methods such as completion rates and satisfaction surveys were used for these types of units. Other community and public service areas provided goals, degree of achievement, and use of data including the Modifications to Renaissance Academy report resulting from student open house feedback and the John Scott Dailey Florida Institute of Government Report documenting the IOG upgrade of the website. Evidence is provided for improvement based on analysis of results under the headings of Faculty Support for Service Learning and Student Participation.

- 3.3.2** The institution has developed a Quality Enhancement Plan that (1) demonstrates institutional capability for the initiation, implementation, and completion of the QEP; (2) includes broad-based involvement of institutional constituencies in the development and proposed implementation of the QEP; and (3) identifies goals and a plan to assess their achievement. **(Quality Enhancement Plan)**

The institution satisfactorily addressed all components of this standard. See Part III for additional information.

3.4.1 The institution demonstrates that each educational program for which academic credit is awarded is approved by the faculty and the administration. **(Academic program approval)**

In the narrative response to this standard the institution separates the development of institutional policy and procedures from the development of traditional academic policy and procedures. The institution's Guidelines and Procedure for Approval and Issuance of University Policies (Policy: 1.001) outlines the responsibility for the development and review of institutional policies and specifically exempts traditional academic policies from its purview. Policy or procedure governing academic policy is presented in the FGCU new degree program approval process flowchart and the accompanying narrative which demonstrates faculty and administrative approval.

3.4.2 The institution's continuing education, outreach, and service programs are consistent with the institution's mission. **(Continuing education/service programs)**

FGCU provides evidence demonstrating its mission-driven efforts to maintain a strong commitment to continuing education, outreach, and service within its region. Examples include lifelong learning, public sector training and technical assistance, private sector professional development, certification, workforce education, small business development and impact studies, offered by its Office of Continuing Education, Off Campus Programs and Centers and Institutes within the College of Business and the College of Arts and Sciences.

***3.4.3** The institution publishes admissions policies that are consistent with its mission. **(Admissions policies)**

The Florida Department of Education provides information concerning admission requirements for the state universities and the 28 state colleges through the Florida Virtual Campus website. The Florida Counseling for Future Education Handbook, published annually, provides high school counselors with information regarding the academic requirements for admission into the public universities and colleges.

Admission requirements are published within the FGCU Catalog and online for First Time In College (FTIC) students, Early Admission and Dual Enrollment students, undergraduate transfer students, international applicants, and non-degree seeking students.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed a variety of documents such as the University Catalog, advising manuals and published Admission Policies for various types of undergraduate and graduate students. The Committee also reviewed websites of the Office of Admissions, the Office of Research & Graduate Studies and a variety of academic programs offering graduate degrees. The Committee conducted interviews with the Director of Graduate Studies, Director of Admissions, Assistant Director of Undergraduate Admissions, and Assistant Director of Transfer & International Admissions in support of the

institution's case for compliance. The Committee affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

- 3.4.4** The institution publishes policies that include criteria for evaluating, awarding, and accepting credit for transfer, experiential learning, credit by examination, advanced placement, and professional certificates that is consistent with its mission and ensures that course work and learning outcomes are at the collegiate level and comparable to the institution's own degree programs. The institution assumes responsibility for the academic quality of any course work or credit recorded on the institution's transcript. (See *Commission policy "Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards: Policy and Procedures."*) **(Acceptance of academic credit)**

The institution publishes policies for awarding credit for transfer courses, experiential credit, advanced placement, military courses and other types of courses both at the undergraduate and graduate level. For graduate programs, the maximum number of transfer credits is determined by individual programs. International students must submit copies of syllabi to be considered for transfer credit. FGCU accepts evaluation of international students and translations from members of the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES). FGCU does not give credit for experiential learning, but three programs in the College of Arts and Sciences allow students to receive credit providing that they demonstrate achievement of specific learning outcomes through examinations. Only students enrolled in a major and who have completed 60 credit hours in the program are eligible to take these exams.

- 3.4.5** The institution publishes academic policies that adhere to principles of good educational practice. These policies are disseminated to students, faculty, and other interested parties through publications that accurately represent the programs and services of the institution. **(Academic policies)**

FGCU publishes its academic policies in the form of rules and regulations in its University Catalog, covering such areas as student affairs, undergraduate and graduate admissions, registration and records, financial aid and scholarships, tuition, fees, refunds, undergraduate and graduate academic. The Catalog is available online. The university demonstrates use of good educational practices by engaging faculty, staff, and administration in the conception, development, and ultimately implementation of these policies. Evidence is provided in the form of revised policies as they make their way through this inclusive process.

- 3.4.6** The institution employs sound and acceptable practices for determining the amount and level of credit awarded for courses, regardless of format or mode of delivery. **(Practices for awarding credit)**

For the definition of a credit hour, Florida Gulf Coast University follows the guidelines provided by the Department of Education and published in the Code of Federal Regulations Title 34: Education 600.2. The institution defines a credit hour as the amount of instruction that involves 50 minutes of direct instruction (or equivalent) followed by an additional two hours of student work outside the classroom, over a 15 week period. This definition sets the minimum standards for all forms of instruction such as lecture courses, laboratories, practica, internships, studio work, etc. The amount of credit assigned to a course is consistent across all institutions in the state of Florida.

Approval of new courses (regardless of format and delivery mode) is initiated by the faculty member and submitted through the Curriculum Management System. New courses or changes to existing courses are first approved by the department chair, then by the college curriculum committee, and by the Graduate or Undergraduate curriculum teams. The institution provides rosters for both teams and an example of the forms submitted for approval of new courses.

- 3.4.7** The institution ensures the quality of educational programs and courses offered through consortia relationships or contractual agreements, ensures ongoing compliance with the *Principles* and periodically evaluates the consortial relationship and/or agreement against the mission of the institution. (See the Commission policy “Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards: Policy and Procedures.”) **(Consortia relationships/contractual agreements)**

The institution does not offer any program through consortia and does not have agreements with other academic institutions.

- 3.4.8** The institution awards academic credit for course work taken on a noncredit basis only when there is documentation that the noncredit course work is equivalent to a designated credit experience. **(Noncredit to credit)**

Florida Gulf Coast University does not award credit for course work taken on a noncredit basis.

- 3.4.9** The institution provides appropriate academic support services. **(Academic support services)**

The University offers an appropriate, and comprehensive array of library services; academic advising to all students; a Center for Academic Achievement, supplemental instruction; a writing center; a speech communication lab; adaptive services for those requiring accommodations; the Student Support Services (TRIO) program; an honors program; counseling services; an office of service learning and civic engagement; and technology resources, including Canvas, a next-generation learning management system (LMS) for colleges and universities that encourages communication, collaboration and creativity while retaining the essential features of an LMS. Computer labs and technology tutorials are additional examples of technology resources.

The University provides academic advising by trained professional advisors and faculty. Initial contact with a professional academic advisor occurs at Eagle View Orientation. Tutoring and academic support for math and science labs are offered through the math/science walk-in labs, located in the library and in housing. An analysis of their webpage and their Catalog detailed the type of Academic support services provided and is consistent with their report.

- 3.4.10** The institution places primary responsibility for the content, quality, and effectiveness of its curriculum with its faculty. **(Responsibility for curriculum)**

At Florida Gulf Coast University, the responsibility for course content and quality rests on the faculty. The Faculty Senate oversees curriculum content and quality through five different standing committees including: Undergraduate Curriculum

Team; Graduate Curriculum Team, General Education Council, Graduate Affairs Team and the Program Review Team. The institution provides rosters of each committee and a description of their roles and responsibilities.

Curricula for degree programs and certificates are subjected to periodic review to assure their content is up to date with changes in the discipline. The institution provides examples of forms used for these evaluations and also minutes of evaluation committee meetings.

- *3.4.11** For each major in a degree program, the institution assigns responsibility for program coordination, as well as for curriculum development and review, to persons academically qualified in the field. In those degree programs for which the institution does not identify a major, this requirement applies to a curricular area or concentration. **(Academic program coordination)**

The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee found that from the CVs linked to several program coordinators' names listed on a chart provided by FGCU, it was not possible to confirm that the respective coordinators are qualified. For example, CVs for the coordinators of undergraduate programs in Psychology, Communication/ Philosophy, and Nursing (BSN) and the Master's in English, a PhD degree is listed as having been earned by the coordinator but no area of study is provided. Further, the coordinator for the MS program in Occupational Therapy has graduate degrees only in Higher Education and Instructional Technology. For the MSN coordinator, no terminal degree has been earned.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee has reviewed the documents and initial concerns of the off-site committee relative to the academic program coordinators. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee has received additional documentation from the institution, including curriculum vitae and additional credentials. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee met with the Provost and found that the institution assigns responsibility for program coordination to academically qualified persons.

- 3.4.12** The institution's use of technology enhances student learning and is appropriate for meeting the objectives of its programs. Students have access to and training in the use of technology. **(Technology use)**

An array of technology, networked and virtual information resources, tools and systems supports student learning and ensures that the institution meets its objectives. Classroom and instructional support, campus and distance learning support, and technology training alike are well coordinated. Faculty resources and library resources provide additional examples of technology in the service of academic success. Various methods and modes of assessing user satisfaction with the technology environs are employed, informing both changes and decision making in this rapidly evolving area.

- 3.5.1** The institution identifies college-level general education competencies and the extent to which students have attained them. **(General education competencies)**

The institution has identified college-level general education competencies and has developed methodology to examine the extent to which students have attained them. The utilization of all the Validated Assessment of Undergraduate Education (VALUE) project developed by the Association of American Colleges

and Universities (AAC&U) strengthens the institution's approach to the assessment of its general education student learning outcomes. Additionally, it is noted that the foci of the institution's general education student learning outcomes (Quantitative Reasoning, Written Communication, and Critical Thinking) overlap significantly with and are extended into the discipline specific student learning outcomes. The documents support the existence of a robust conversation among the institution's faculty about student learning outcomes at both the general education and disciplinary specific levels.

- 3.5.2** At least 25 percent of the credit hours required for the degree are earned through instruction offered by the institution awarding the degree. (*See the Commission policy "Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards: Policy and Procedures."*) **(Institutional credits for a degree)**.

FGCU's policy, as stated in the catalog, requires that for all baccalaureate degrees at least 25 percent of the course work for the degree and a minimum of 30 hours of the last 60 credit hours earned toward the degree must be earned at the institution. In addition to this statement in the catalog, which is available online, coursework sections from official and unofficial transcripts, showing accepted transfer credit totals listed under each attended institution, document application of transfer credit as opposed to institutional credit.

- 3.5.3** The institution publishes requirements for its undergraduate programs, including its general education components. These requirements conform to commonly accepted standards and practices for degree programs. (*See the Commission policy "The Quality and Integrity of Undergraduate Degrees."*) **(Undergraduate program requirements)**

Requirements for undergraduate programs are published in the online catalog and on individual program webpages. Sample pages are provided as evidence of publication of these requirements. The process for reviewing and approving curricula includes the college curriculum team; college dean; standing teams of the Faculty Senate; Council of Deans; units of Academic Affairs; the Provost; and the President. A Statewide Articulation Agreement ensures that the participating institutions adhere to a standard set of academic policies and practices and accreditation and program review procedures ensure alignment with commonly accepted standards and practices.

- 3.5.4** At least 25 percent of the course hours in each major at the baccalaureate level are taught by faculty members holding an appropriate terminal degree—usually the earned doctorate or the equivalent of the terminal degree. **(Terminal degrees of faculty)**

Data provided reveals that no program has less than 30 percent of course work for any program at the baccalaureate level being taught by faculty members holding an appropriate terminal degree.

- 3.6.1** The institution's post-baccalaureate professional degree programs, and its master's and doctoral degree programs, are progressively more advanced in academic content than its undergraduate programs. **(Post-baccalaureate program rigor)**

Graduate programs at Florida Gulf Coast University are progressively more advanced than undergraduate programs both in learning outcomes and admission requirements. In 2012 a Task Force appointed by the Faculty Senate produced a document delineating the expected Graduate Student Learning Outcomes. According to this document (enclosed in the report) the learning outcomes will demonstrate critical thinking beyond the undergraduate level, advanced communication skills and achievement of advanced knowledge in the field.

Using as an example a program in Criminal Justice, the report compares the curricula at the undergraduate and graduate levels to show the differences in admission requirements, content and learning outcomes between the two levels.

- 3.6.2** The institution structures its graduate curricula (1) to include knowledge of the literature of the discipline and (2) to ensure ongoing student engagement in research and/or appropriate professional practice and training experiences. **(Graduate curriculum)**

FGCU's graduate programs include specific course components engaging students in independent research projects, portfolios, case studies, theses, dissertations, and similar activities. The institution provides a table demonstrating examples of the types of advanced activities for each graduate program, which include gaining knowledge of the literature of the discipline and ongoing student engagement in research or professional practice and training experiences. Redacted samples of student artifacts are also provided.

- 3.6.3** At least one-third of credits toward a graduate or a post-baccalaureate professional degree are earned through instruction offered by the institution awarding the degree. *(See the Commission policy "Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards: Policy and Procedures.")* **(Institutional credits for a degree)**

A review of the institution's General Graduate Academic Policies indicates that the institution requires at least 50 percent of the course work for all post-baccalaureate, education specialist, and graduate degrees to be completed through the institution.

- 3.6.4** The institution defines and publishes requirements for its graduate and post-graduate professional programs. These requirements conform to commonly accepted standards and practices for degree programs. **(Post-baccalaureate program requirements)**

Florida Gulf Coast University publishes the requirements for post-baccalaureate and graduate education. The report includes an example from the FGCU Catalog (the graduate program on Mental Health Counseling), listing deadlines, admission requirements, program information, etc. The Office for Research and Graduate Studies works together with individual graduate programs to oversee the publication of information materials.

- 3.7.1** The institution employs competent faculty members qualified to accomplish the mission and goals of the institution. When determining acceptable qualifications of its faculty, an institution gives primary consideration to the highest earned degree in the discipline. The institution also considers competence,

effectiveness, and capacity, including, as appropriate, undergraduate and graduate degrees, related work experiences in the field, professional licensure and certifications, honors and awards, continuous documented excellence in teaching, or other demonstrated competencies and achievements that contribute to effective teaching and student learning outcomes. For all cases, the institution is responsible for justifying and documenting the qualifications of its faculty. (See *Commission guidelines "Faculty Credentials."*) **(Faculty competence)**

The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee found 18 faculty members listed in the roster provided by FGCU who did not appear to meet the expected minimal qualifications for the course or program they are assigned to. In some cases faculty members are teaching graduate-level courses without a doctorate degree. In other cases, the academic background of the faculty member does not match the material covered in specific courses. A Request for Justifying and Documenting Qualifications of Faculty form was provided the institution.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee has reviewed the *Request for Justifying and Documenting Qualifications of Faculty* identified by the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee pertaining to 3.7.1 Faculty Credentials of the institution. The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee identified 18 faculty members for further review. Subsequently, the On-Site Committee has comprehensively reviewed each of the 18 faculty members at question, has met with the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Director of Budgeting and Management Services for Academic Affairs, the Dean and academic administrators from the College of Arts and Sciences, and the Dean and academic administrators of the College of Health Professions and Social Work, and concludes that the institution has demonstrated that it employs competent faculty members.

3.7.2 The institution regularly evaluates the effectiveness of each faculty member in accord with published criteria, regardless of contractual or tenured status. **(Faculty evaluation)**

FGCU's Institution-wide mechanism for full-time faculty evaluation is the Faculty Performance and Evaluation Document, details of which are provided in a published document. Evaluation criteria include measurements of performance in the areas of teaching, scholarship/ creative activity and service. Faculty members are reviewed against standards established in each respective college's peer review performance document, a sample of which is in evidence. For full-time faculty, this process includes three steps: a Professional Development Plan, Faculty Activity Report and Performance Evaluation Report. The last of these outlines the extent to which established goals were accomplished. Adjunct faculty and teaching assistants are subject to periodic peer evaluation consisting of 13 points of measurement.

3.7.3 The institution provides evidence of ongoing professional development of faculty as teachers, scholars, and practitioners. **(Faculty development)**

FGCU documents activities and programs to promote the achievement of professional development. In addition to the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Initiative (TLAI) sponsored by the Lucas Center for Faculty Development opportunities for professional development offered through competitive grant opportunities managed by the Faculty Senate and the Office of Research and Graduate Studies. These opportunities are available in conjunction with funding

available at the college level, through the Provost's Office, and intended for in-unit faculty as part of the collective bargaining agreement.

3.7.4 The institution ensures adequate procedures for safeguarding and protecting academic freedom. **(Academic freedom)**

Florida Gulf Coast University ensures academic freedom through various documents including Bylaws, Policies, and Collective Bargaining Agreements. The administration and Board of Trustees specifically affirm the value of academic freedom.

The faculty at FGCU strongly supports academic freedom and in a few cases has filed grievances when they perceive that this right is being obstructed. The report describes one of these cases in which the faculty perceived that their freedom to select textbooks was being compromised by a resolution from the Florida Board of Governors, and reports the process that led to arbitration in this matter.

3.7.5 The institution publishes policies on the responsibility and authority of faculty in academic and governance matters. **(Faculty role in governance)**

FGCU publishes its policy on the authority and responsibilities of the faculty in academic and governance matters as part of its policy on shared governance, with a detailed chart also provided ("FGCU Governance Structure"). The faculty role is further clarified in the FGCU Faculty Governance Document, online Faculty Resource Guide, and Statement of Agency Organization and Operation. Documents are also provided in evidence that the policy is put into regular practice.

3.8.1 The institution provides facilities and learning/information resources that are appropriate to support its teaching, research, and service mission. **(Learning/information resources)**

The Library's facilities, technology resources, hours and access, services to individuals with disabilities, and learning/information resources are appropriate for the University's teaching, research and service needs in alignment with its mission. An expanded facility with enhanced technology resources, extended hours, and funding to cover the costs of extended hours, represent concrete deliverables that affirm the Library's relevance to FGCU's mission. Input from students, faculty and staff about Library facilities drives and informs improvement activities. A variety of formal and informal means of soliciting input are used throughout the year. Several improvements have been made to ensure that persons with disabilities have equal access and opportunity. Data pertaining to library use (visitors) and library technology use suggest that the Library is increasingly valued by students, faculty and staff, and a destination in its own right.

The provision of collections that are appropriate to FGCU's programs and its mission is assured by the Library's systematic and professional approach to the development of print and online collections and by its investment in its Digital Library initiative. Data and information from LibQUAL surveys and the 2013 Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory affirm, again, that the Library is moving in the right direction.

Distance learning, and distance learners in general, are supported through a variety of means, including investment in consortial e-journal packages, identification of e-books as a preferred format, investment in large streaming audiovisual collections, and efforts in support of the preservation of several local history collections.

3.8.2 The institution ensures that users have access to regular and timely instruction in the use of the library and other learning/information resources. **(Instruction of library use)**

Endorsed by the Deans Council, November 1997 and by the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee July 17, 1998 and revised January 11, 2008, FGCU Library's Information Literacy Program continues to enjoy not only growth but also success on multiple fronts.

The Library provides a variety of learning opportunities to ensure that users have access to regular and timely instruction in the use of the Library and other learning/information resources. These include scheduled and on-demand Library instruction, tutorials, research guides, tours, events and orientations. Individual instruction is also provided via text, email, chat, phone, scheduled individual and small group consultations, and drop-in visits. Individually and collectively, these learning opportunities serve to create awareness of the Library. A strong commitment to Library instruction 24/7 is noted with examples drawn from Library website features and functionality leveraged towards this end – tutorials, guides, links, use of chat, text, etc.

The classroom and workshops offer additional venues/opportunities for information literacy instruction. Interactive learning tutorials are yet another method/mode for extending the reach of information literacy instruction.

Assessment is a key ingredient in the continuing success of the FGCU Library's Information Literacy Program. The ACRL Board of the American Library Association published "Characteristics of Programs of Information Literacy that Illustrate Best Practices: A Guideline" in June 2003, with a revision in January 2012. The narrative reports that the FGCU Library is strong in the majority of the categories. FGCU subject librarians have been conducting assessments and evaluation of student learning and their teaching for some time. In 2012, evidencing the continuing maturation of information literacy at FGCU, an Instructional Assessment Task Force was created to standardize the assessment instrument being used with undergraduate students.

Looking ahead, the narrative further notes that the University's new Quality Enhancement Plan will address information literacy across the curriculum; this will, in turn, assist the Library in the articulation within the curriculum category.

3.8.3 The institution provides a sufficient number of qualified staff—with appropriate education or experiences in library and/or other learning/information resources—to accomplish the mission of the institution. **(Qualified staff)**

The adequacy of staffing is established by several factors: operating hours/service desk hours/staffing during those hours; assessment data from The 2013 Noel- Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory; and complementary

assessment data from LibQUAL+. Data and information about staffing from peer or benchmark institutions would provide further evidence of adequacy of staffing.

Adequacy of librarians is established by discussion of their roles and responsibilities, the terms and conditions of their employ, their opportunities for advancement, their professional development, and their governance. Faculty rank and credentials are provided. Evidentiary documentation for Library Faculty does not include job descriptions. The inclusion of job descriptions is necessary for assessing qualifications.

Staff development is embraced; numerous opportunities for development are cited.

3.9.1 The institution publishes a clear and appropriate statement of student rights and responsibilities and disseminates the statement to the campus community. **(Student rights)**

The Student Code of Conduct establishes the expectation that students will know and adhere to the rules and regulations of the University, as well as state and federal laws. The code is published annually on the FGCU Office of Student Conduct website for all students to access. In addition, the Dean of Students' Office places advertisements in the student newspaper informing students about the code.

During all new student orientation sessions, students are referred to the online Student Code of Conduct and a discussion about behavioral and academic dishonesty is included in the program. Faculty is also provided with information about the student conduct and academic integrity process through the Dean of Students' Office Open Forums, faculty orientation, and campus-wide emails from the Dean of Students Office/Office of Student Conduct.

A review of the Dean of Students' website and catalog of services confirms their clarity in informing students of their rights and responsibilities.

3.9.2 The institution protects the security, confidentiality, and integrity of its student records and maintains security measures to protect and back up data. **(Student records)**.

Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) enforces policies and procedures to safeguard the security, confidentiality, and integrity of its student records. Each unit (school, college, institute, center, or division) that has access to student records is responsible for adhering to all related federal, state, and local laws, and FGCU rules, regulations, and policies.

The Office of the Registrar is the central repository for all academic records, relevant supporting documentation, and general educational records at FGCU. Access to student data records is maintained by a restricted group of data custodians. Every three months (quarterly), security review documents are sent by Business Technology Services to the data custodians to confirm, review, and update access as necessary to ensure continuing security conditions are met.

3.9.3 The institution provides a sufficient number of qualified staff—with appropriate education or experience in the student affairs area—to accomplish the mission of the institution. **(Qualified staff)**

The mission of the Division of Student Affairs is appropriately related to the mission of the University and the Division is sufficiently staffed to meet its mission. The professional staff members in the Division of Student Affairs have appropriate degrees pertinent to their positions and have significant years of experience within their areas of service.

To help staff remain current in their respective fields and to expand their knowledge and skills, they are given a variety of professional growth opportunities, both on and off campus. Student Affairs staff maintain active membership in national, regional, state, and local professional associations. A review of their resumes provided confirms their appropriate experience and their years of service in higher education.

3.10.1 The institution's recent financial history demonstrates financial stability. **(Financial stability)**

The Institution has provided enrollment figures for the last three years which denote steady increases for the past three years with fall 2013 enrollment at 12,697.

From the Institution's Financial statements for fiscal year 2011 through 2013 current assets decreased from \$72.5 million to \$67.7 million; Unrestricted Net Assets decreased from \$338.1 million to \$337.4 million; Net Capital Assets decreased from \$371.3 million to \$357.6 million and Total Assets increased from \$609.3 million to \$623.4 million.

The value of the Institution's Endowment has increased from \$55.3 million in 2009 to \$62.9 million in 2013.

State appropriations decreased from \$46.8 million in 2011 to \$44.2 million; In FY 2013, however, tuition and fees increased from \$39.3 million to \$53.0 million over the same period.

***3.10.2** The institution audits financial aid programs as required by federal and state regulations. **(Financial aid audits)**

The Institution has met the Financial Aid audit requirements through audits performed by the Auditor General of the State of Florida. The audits are conducted in accordance with proper state, federal and the accounting professional auditing standards.

In its 2013 Compliance and Internal Controls over Financial Reporting and Federal Awards, the Institution was cited for two control findings. Both recommendations have been implemented. Financial Aid audits from 2009 through 2012 did not disclose any internal control findings.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed documents such as the financial audit for the 2014 fiscal year and conducted interviews with the Chief Financial

Officer in support of the institution's case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

3.10.3 The institution exercises appropriate control over all its financial resources.
(Control of finances)

The President is responsible for fiscal operations of the University. The Vice President for Academic Affairs, Vice President for Administration and Finance and Vice President for Advancement each have specific financial responsibilities.

The Institution uses Banner as its financial accounting system. Expenditure approvals are automated through the workflow system functionality.

The Institution's Board of Trustees approves the annual operating budget.

The Institution is a component of the State University System of Florida and must comply with state budgetary requirements.

Financial regulations and policies are developed and posted on the Office of General Council's website. Other policies for cash collection, accounts receivables, procurement and third party billings are on the comptroller's website.

The Institution's internal audit function is independent through its reporting relationship to the Trustees. The financial statement audit is performed by the Auditor General of the State of Florida. In its latest available audit (2013), no internal control deficiencies were included in the report.

The individuals responsible for the fiscal operations of the Institution have many years of experience and appear properly credentialed.

3.10.4 The institution maintains financial control over externally funded or sponsored research and programs. **(Control of sponsored research/external funds)**

Internal control over Sponsored Programs is responsibility of the Associate Vice President of Research and Dean of Graduate Studies.

Policies governing external expenditures are established and controlled by the Sponsored Programs Office with assistance from Finance, Human Resources and Procurement.

Sponsored Program awards are deposited with the Institution and follow the Institution's standard financial transaction processing and protocols through its Banner financial system.

External audits are performed for the Institution by the State of Florida Auditor General.

3.11.1 The institution exercises appropriate control over all its physical resources.
(Control of physical resources)

The Vice President for Administrative Services is the custodian of all Institution property. The custodian has delegated property control responsibilities to the

Finance and Accounting Property Administrator. The process is governed by policy and uses the Banner Fixed Asset System to control and record assets. Inventories are performed annually.

The Institution uses the State of Florida's self-insurance program for property and casualty insurance, general liability and fleet automotive liability.

Physical plant manages routine preventative and deferred maintenance. The campus is seventeen years old. Historically, deferred maintenance has not been a major issue. However, the Institution has instituted steps to mitigate a buildup of deferred maintenance.

3.11.2 The institution takes reasonable steps to provide a healthy, safe, and secure environment for all members of the campus community. **(Institutional environment)**

The Department of Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) is responsible for safety programs and coordinating risk management activities for insurance, work place safety, and hazardous materials.

The Institution's Safety Plan is a component of the Continuing Operations Plan.

The Institution operates a campus security program under the direction of the Police Department. The Police Department coordinates the Emergency Notification System as well.

***3.11.3** The institution operates and maintains physical facilities, both on and off campus, that appropriately serve the needs of the institution's educational programs, support services, and other mission-related activities. **(Physical facilities)**

The Institution has a campus master plan to prioritize and plan for future physical facilities. A master plan is required for every institution in the system. The plan was updated in 2012. An independent plant study is coordinated every four years to determine the amount of space available by category on each campus. The most recent plant survey was conducted in 2012. The Institution's facilities are managed by department charged with the responsibility of providing a safe, clean environment to meet the mission. The Institution is only 17 years old, thus deferred maintenance is not a major issue at this time. The Institution receives feedback from its students through the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory. Last conducted in 2013, the inventory denotes high satisfaction with facilities. The Institution has an adequate technology infrastructure that meets current needs and can be expanded as necessary.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed documents such as the Campus Master Plan and inspected various campus facilities in support of the institution's case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

3.12.1 The institution notifies the Commission of changes in accordance with the Commission's substantive change policy and, when required, seeks approval prior to the initiation of changes. *(See the Commission policy "Substantive Changes for Accredited Institutions.")* **(Substantive change)**

The Reaffirmation Committee reviewed FGCU's policy specifying the requirements for the submission of substantive change and the process for obtaining approvals and letters from SACSCOC notifying the institution of level change, consortia agreements with several Chinese institutions, and approval of two doctoral programs.

3.13.1 The institution complies with the policies of the Commission on Colleges. (Policy compliance)

(Note: Institutions are responsible for reviewing the following Commission policies and providing evidence of compliance with those that are applicable. Those that have asterisks are policies that include a federal mandate.)

***3.13.1. "Accrediting Decisions of Other Agencies"**

Applicable Policy Statement. Any institution seeking or holding accreditation from more than one U.S. Department of Education recognized accrediting body must describe itself in identical terms to each recognized accrediting body with regard to purpose, governance, programs, degrees, diplomas, certificates, personnel, finances, and constituencies, and must keep each institutional accrediting body apprised of any change in its status with one or another accrediting body.

Documentation: The institution should (1) list federally recognized agencies that currently accredit the institution or any of its programs, (2) provide the date of the most recent review by each agency and indicate if negative action was taken by the agency and the reason for such action, (3) provide copies of statements used to describe itself for each of the accrediting bodies, (4) indicate any agency that has terminated accreditation, the date, and the reason for termination, and (5) indicate the date and reason for the institution voluntarily withdrawing accreditation with any of the agencies.

The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed the institution's list of DOE recognized programs, the agency websites listing the accreditation approvals, institutional procedures and reviewed the letters sent to each accreditation agency describing the institution in identical terms.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed the same documentation and sources and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

3.13.2 "Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards: Policy and Procedures"

Applicable Policy Statement. Member institutions are responsible for notifying and providing SACSCOC with signed final copies of agreements governing their collaborative academic arrangements (as defined in this policy). These arrangements must address the requirements set forth in the collaborative academic arrangements policy and procedures. For all such arrangements, SACSCOC-accredited institutions assume responsibility for (1) the integrity of the collaborative academic arrangements, (2) the quality of credits recorded on their transcripts, and (3) compliance with accreditation requirements.

Documentation: The institution should provide evidence that it has reported to the Commission all collaborative academic arrangements (as defined in this

policy) that included signed final copies of the agreements. In addition, the institution should integrate into the Compliance Certification a discussion and determination of compliance with all standards applicable to the provisions of the agreements.

FGCU does not have collaborative arrangements at this time as defined by SACSCOC policy.

***3.13.3 “Complaint Procedures Against the Commission or Its Accredited Institutions”**

Applicable Policy Statement. Each institution is required to have in place student complaint policies and procedures that are reasonable, fairly administered, and well-publicized. (See *FR 4.5*). The Commission also requires, in accord with federal regulations, that each institution maintains a record of complaints received by the institution. This record is made available to the Commission upon request. This record will be reviewed and evaluated by the Commission as part of the institution’s decennial evaluation.

Documentation: When addressing this policy statement, the institution should provide information to the Commission describing how the institution maintains its record and also include the following: (1) individuals/offices responsible for the maintenance of the record(s), (2) elements of a complaint review that are included in the record, and (3) where the record(s) is located (centralized or decentralized). The record itself will be reviewed during the On-Site evaluation of the institution.

Policies and procedures related to written student complaints are clearly stated in the University General Counsel website and the University Catalog. There is a decentralized recording of and storage of the documentation of the written complaints. Students are provided access to documents that provide guidance for filing complaints and their adjudication with regard to grievances, grade appeals, and student discipline.

Depending upon the category of complaint and the circumstances of its resolution, records pertaining to the complaint and its disposition may be stored centrally or distributed and held in paper and/or electronic files.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed documents including the University Catalog, Student Guidebook, a sample collection of student complaints, Student Code of Conduct, and various University Policies, as well as the websites of the Provost, General Counsel and Student Conduct. The Committee also conducted interviews with the Vice President for Student Affairs, Dean of Student Affairs, and Ombudsman in support of the institution’s case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

3.13.4 “Reaffirmation of Accreditation and Subsequent Reports”

***3.13.4.a. Applicable Policy Statement.** An institution includes a review of its distance learning programs in the Compliance Certification.

Documentation: In order to be in compliance with this policy, the institution must have incorporated an assessment of its compliance with standards that apply to its distance and correspondence education programs and courses.

FGCU provides an assessment demonstrating how it ensures its distance and correspondence education courses and programs comply with the Principles of Accreditation in all educational programs and services, however delivered, in terms of Curriculum and Instruction, Faculty, Institutional Effectiveness, Library and Learning Resources, Student Services, and Finances and Facilities. Finally, it details its Mission's commitment to online education in the Guiding Principles of the University, which expand on the Mission.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee has reviewed the documentation and interviewed appropriate FGCU staff and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

3.13.4.b. Applicable Policy Statement. If an institution is part of a system or corporate structure, a description of the system operation (or corporate structure) is submitted as part of the Compliance Certification for the decennial review. The description should be designed to help members of the peer review committees understand the mission, governance, and operating procedures of the system and the individual institution's role within that system.

Documentation: The institution should provide a description of the system operation and structure or the corporate structure if this applies.

The Institution is a constituent of the State University System of Florida. There are 12 institutions that comprise the State University System. The Institution has provided a description of the State University System and the University's role within that system. The description denotes the responsibilities of the Institution's local Board of Trustees and the System's Board of Governors.

3.13.5 "Separate Accreditation for Units of a Member Institution"

***3.13.5.a. Applicable Policy Statement.** All branch campuses related to the parent campus through corporate or administrative control (1) include the name of the parent campus and make it clear that its accreditation is dependent on the continued accreditation of the parent campus and (2) are evaluated during reviews for institutions seeking candidacy, initial membership, or reaffirmation of accreditation. All other extended units under the accreditation of the parent campus are also evaluated during such reviews.

Documentation: For institutions with branch campuses: (1) The name of each branch campus must include the name of the parent campus—the SACSCOC accredited entity. The institution should provide evidence of this for each of its branch campuses. (2) The institution should incorporate the review of its branch campuses, as well as other extended units under the parent campus, into its comprehensive self-assessment and its determination of compliance with the standards, and indicate the procedure for doing so.

The institution does not have a branch campus.

3.13.5.b. Applicable Policy Statement. If the Commission on Colleges determines that an extended unit is autonomous to the extent that the control over that unit by the parent or its board is significantly impaired, the Commission may direct that the extended unit seek to become a separately accredited institution. A unit which seeks separate accreditation should bear a different name from that of the parent. A unit which is located in a state or country outside the geographic jurisdiction of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and which the Commission determines should be separately accredited or the institution requests to be separately accredited, applies for separate accreditation from the regional accrediting association that accredits colleges in that state or country

Implementation: If, during its review of the institution, the Commission determines that an extended unit is sufficiently autonomous to the extent that the parent campus has little or no control, the Commission will use this policy to recommend separate accreditation of the extended unit. ***No response required by the institution.***

Constitution of the State of Florida creates a single state university system comprised of all public universities. The committee reviewed the appropriate statutes of the State Constitution, the mission statement of the State University System of Florida (SUS) Board of Governors, board responsibilities for approval of all university budgets, including the establishment of tuition and fees, guidelines relating to division of sponsored research, procedures related to data and technology, and its authority to confirm the selection of each university president. The institution provides a clear explanation of the state system structure and the institution's role within the state system. The institution has no extended units.

3.14.1 A member or candidate institution represents its accredited status accurately and publishes the name, address, and telephone number of the Commission in accordance with Commission requirements and federal policy. **(Publication of accreditation status)**

Florida Gulf Coast University represents its accredited status accurately and publishes the name, address, and telephone number of the Commission in accordance with SACSCOC's requirements and federal policy. However, on the Catalog Home Page the statement is close to the approved SACSCOC approved statement, but not identical.

Florida Gulf Coast University is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097; Telephone number (404) 679-4500 to award associate, baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral degrees.

NOTE: SACSCOC recently changed its corporate name from the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. All publications should reflect this change.

D. Assessment of Compliance with Section 4: Federal Requirements

- *4.1** The institution evaluates success with respect to student achievement consistent with its mission. Criteria may include: enrollment data; retention, graduation, course completion, and job placement rates; state licensing examinations, student portfolios; or other means of demonstrating achievement of goals. **(Student achievement)**

The institution measures student achievement using data from enrollment, degree completion, job placement, performance on state and national licensing exams, diversity, retention, graduation, degree production, course completion, post-graduation employment, and specialized accreditation measures. The measures are consistent with the mission and types of degrees offered. The FGCU Board of Trustees sets goals with the President related to student achievement annually with benchmarks determined by historical data. These data are reported in multiple places including the Annual Report to the Board of Governors. As the institution functions under formula based funding, the measures are also used by the state in funding allocation.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee has reviewed the evidence and concurs with the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

- *4.2** The institution's curriculum is directly related and appropriate to the mission and goals of the institution and the diplomas, certificates, or degrees awarded. **(Program curriculum)**

Academic programs at all levels are linked to the institutions mission and strategic plan. This process is monitored at the State University System level, the institutional Board of Trustees level, and the University curriculum development level.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee has reviewed the documentation and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

- *4.3** The institution makes available to students and the public current academic calendars, grading policies, and refund policies. **(Publication of policies)**

The Academic Calendar is published in multiple locations including the Registrar's Office web page, the *Undergraduate and the Graduate Catalog*. The Grading Policy is clearly outlined in each Catalog with details how grades are assigned, the determination of quality points, an explanation of the grade change process, and an explanation of the grade appeals process.

The Refund Policy is published in multiple locations including the Catalogs, the Bursar's office and the website.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed the University Catalog, as well as the Registrar's website, the Bursar's website and the Student Conduct website. The committee also conducted an interview with the University Registrar in support of the institution's case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

- *4.4** Program length is appropriate for each of the institution's educational programs. **(Program length)**

Program length targets are set by the State's legislature and are closely monitored by the State University System. All Associate degree programs requiring more than 60 semester credit hours and all baccalaureate degree programs requiring more than 120 hours require specific approval by the State University System Board of Governors. As faculty and academic departments plan programs requiring exception to the 120 hour limit they are required to make the case for the exception at the University Academic Affairs level, University Board of Trustees level, and finally the State University System Board of Trustees level. The semester credit hour limits and procedures for exceptions are in line with good educational practice.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed documents such as the Academic Catalog, Office of the Registrar Graduation Requirements, Documentation and General Information, and Departmental Curriculum Maps, and conducted interviews with the Provost in support of the institution's case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

- *4.5** The institution has adequate procedures for addressing written student complaints and is responsible for demonstrating that it follows those procedures when resolving student complaints. (*See the Commission policy "Complaint Procedures against the Commission or its Accredited Institutions."*) **(Student complaints)**

Clear procedures for the redress of complaints were documented and can be found on the University Website. Information regarding these three primary procedures, i.e., the Student Grievance Procedure, the Academic Grade Appeal Process and the Student Code of Conduct, is presented at each new student orientation session.

The Student Guidebook also contains this information and relevant sections appear in the Student Code of Conduct which is printed in the student newspaper each fall term. The procedures for lodging these complaints and appeals are clearly outlined in the Student Guidebook. Several examples of responses to written student complaints were provided as examples.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed documents including the University Catalog, Student Guidebook, a sample collection of student complaints, Student Code of Conduct, and various University Policies, as well as the websites of the General Counsel and Student Conduct. The Committee also conducted interviews with the Vice President for Student Affairs, Dean of Students, and Ombudsman in support of the institution's case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

- *4.6** Recruitment materials and presentations accurately represent the institution's practices and policies. **(Recruitment materials)**

The recruitment materials and presentations are developed by the offices that administer them to ensure accuracy. Most of the materials provided can be found online.

The Institution provided samples of a variety of print recruitment publications, materials in portable document format, and hyperlinks to departmental websites displaying recruitment materials. The items reviewed accurately communicate

information about available degree programs of study, financial aid and scholarship opportunities and procedures, admission and related academic policies, academic support, and student life programs and services.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed a variety of recruitment materials such as a Travel Piece, Junior Piece, Senior Piece, Counselor Brochure, Transfer Brochure, as well as the University Catalog. The Committee also reviewed several websites including the Office of Research and Graduate Studies and various specific academic units that offer graduate programs. The Committee conducted interviews with the Director of Graduate Studies, Director of Admissions, the Assistant Director of Undergraduate Admissions and the Assistant Director of Transfer and International Admissions in support of the institution's case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

- *4.7** The institution is in compliance with its program responsibilities under Title IV of the most recent Higher Education Act as amended. (In reviewing the institution's compliance with these program responsibilities, the Commission relies on documentation forwarded to it by the U.S. Department of Education.) **(Title IV program responsibilities)**

The Institution's Program Participation Agreement Letter denotes that the University meets the requirements of institutional eligibility, administrative capacity and financial responsibility for Title IV programs.

The Institution's most recent federal funds audit (FY 2013) included two findings. Both findings were properly addressed and corrective actions taken.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee conducted interviews with the Chief Financial Officer and reviewed documents such as the financial audit for the 2014 fiscal year and the Title IV Program Participation Agreement with the U.S. Department of Education in support of the institution's case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

- *4.8** An institution that offers distance or correspondence education documents each of the following: **(Distance and correspondence education)**

- 4.8.1** demonstrates that the student who registers in a distance or correspondence education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives the credit by verifying the identity of a student who participates in class or coursework by using, at the option of the institution, methods such as (a) a secure login and pass code, (b) proctored examinations, or (c) new or other technologies and practices that are effective in verifying student identification.

FGCU demonstrates compliance with this standard through the use of secure user IDs and passwords, proctored examinations, and the use of additional software technology to prevent inappropriate computer use while testing online. FGCU has invested in an additional layer of security with the procurement and initial deployment of Respondus LockDown Browser. This program provides for a secure web browser that prevents

the user from printing, copying or accessing other programs or web pages while taking a 'Respondus-enabled' quiz or exam.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee has reviewed the evidence and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

- 4.8.2** has a written procedure for protecting the privacy of students enrolled in distance and correspondence education courses or programs.

The Institution includes in its educational records policy the requirements for protection of information on distance education and online students. FGCU's Policy 3.006 articulates the institution requirements for the handling of personally identifiable information. It articulates the institution's position on providing directory information. It also informs students of their rights and the process for blocking the distribution of directory information. Both Florida state law and FERPA requirements inform the policy.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed a variety of recruitment materials, Counselor Brochure, Transfer Brochure, as well as the University Catalog. The Committee also reviewed several websites including the Office of Research and Graduate Studies and various specific academic units that offer graduate programs. The Committee conducted interviews with the Associate Vice President for Research and Dean of Graduate Studies, Director of Admissions, Associate Director of Admissions, and several Assistant Directors of Admissions in support of the institution's case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

- 4.8.3** has a written procedure distributed at the time of registration or enrollment that notifies students of any projected additional student charges associated with verification of student identity.

The Institution does not have a written policy regarding the additional charges for distance education or online students for verifying their online identity. The institution asserts that it ... "does not now, nor in the future, plan to charge students a fee associated with verifying their online identity."

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee confirmed that the Institution has no current or proposed additional fees or other charges associated with verification of student identity for students enrolled in distance or correspondence course. The Committee conducted interviews with the AVP for Academic & Curriculum Support, Assistant Director of Helpdesk & Network Services, and the Assistant Vice President for Business Technology Services in support of the institution's case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

- *4.9** The institution has policies and procedures for determining the credit hours awarded for courses and programs that conform to commonly accepted practices in higher education and to Commission policy. (*See the Commission policy "Credit Hours."*) **(Definition of credit hours)**

Florida Gulf Coast University adopts the Federal definition of a credit hour suggested by the Department of Education and adopted by SACSCOC. This definition determines that, for every credit hour, a student will spend at least one hour (50 minutes) of class time per week and two additional hours of work outside the class, over a 15-week period. An equivalent amount of work is expected for a credit hour in other types of instruction (on line courses, laboratories, field work, studio work, etc.) providing that students devote an equivalent amount of time over a 15-week period.

The Institution also describes a procedure for determining credit hours awarded for approval of new programs or courses.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee has reviewed the evidence including review of the Spring 2015 course schedules, academic calendar, and meeting with the Provost and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

E. Additional observations regarding strengths and weaknesses of the institution. (optional).

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee was impressed by numerous aspects of Florida Gulf Coast University. This was particularly true for the QEP which was developed through a model process and has a focus the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee found to be laudable.

The campus and its facilities are very new. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee was nonetheless impressed, however, by the level of maintenance, cleanliness, and respect for the environment reflected in a campus that in many respects is an environmental laboratory. Included in this aspect was a solar panel array that provides most of the power for several major campus buildings.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee was impressed by the human capital at FGCU. This included very positive impressions of the professionalism and competencies of those with whom the committee met and the palpable sense of pride faculty and staff take in the institution.

Part III. Assessment of the Quality Enhancement Plan

A. Brief description of the institution's Quality Enhancement Plan

Florida Gulf State University's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), "FGCUScholars," focuses on student skills of **writing, critical thinking, and information literacy** in the curriculum of every major. The plan involves creating or revising courses at multiple stages of each program so that students develop the three skills in a scaffolded way. Student learning in writing, critical thinking, and information literacy culminates in the completion of a scholarly project in the program's senior capstone course (a requirement in all 50 undergraduate majors at FGCU). Known as "FGCUScholars: Think. Write. Discover," the QEP helps students intentionally develop the three skills in Composition II, a gateway course in the major, "middle" courses in the major (at the junior and/or senior level), and the senior capstone.

B. Analysis of the Acceptability of the Quality Enhancement Plan

1. ***An Institutional Process.*** *The institution uses an institutional process for identifying key issues emerging from institutional assessment.*

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee's review of *FCGU Scholars Think Write Discover* confirms that FGCU conducted a comprehensive institutional process to identify the appropriate topic for their QEP plan. The QEP topic dovetails nicely with *2010-2015 FCGU Strategic Plan*. Goal 1 is about academic excellence through student research and scholarship, a focus of their QEP. The development of the QEP was a three year process that involved identification of the topic, developing a focus for the topic and gaining support for it.

Identification of Topic (2011-2012)

In year one, they created a QEP Selection Committee of 10 faculty, staff, administrators and students. A call was made to all faculty, staff and students to submit ideas for a topic, and 40 topics were submitted. The Selection Committee reviewed all 40 and developed four broad topics from these. Four teams developed each of these topics in more detail which were reviewed by the Selection Committee as a whole. Strengths and weaknesses were developed for each topic, and then the four were submitted to the Provost for a final decision. The final selection was **writing, critical thinking and information literacy**. Next, the QEP Steering Committee of 20 members was formed which included wide representation from administration, faculty, staff and students.

Developing the Topic (2012-2013)

A working group was developed for each of the three skill areas, and they reviewed best practices and scholarship. These members were both from the Steering Committee and specialists from the broader university community. They developed reports that were then reviewed by the Selection Committee as a whole. They used this information to develop their focus of the QEP- "allowing students to enhance their work as scholars in their fields, and specifically to

advance the ability of our students to improve their writing, critical thinking, and information literacy skills as they move through their programs and towards the capstone projects.” Finally, two faculty forums were held in spring 2013 to provide faculty, staff and students with the information gathered. They were attended by over 50 faculty members who supported the direction of the Steering Committee.

Feedback from University Community & Creating the Plan (2013-2014)

A survey was conducted of all undergraduate program leaders in fall 2013 to determine: definitions of writing, critical thinking and information literacy; in what scholarship students engage; and how and where scholarship is taught in major programs, especially gateway and capstone courses. Open faculty forums were held in spring 2014 to share the draft of plan with faculty, where it was received positively. Finally, the budget was created at the end of spring 2014.

2. **Focus of the Plan.** *The institution identifies a significant issue that (1) focuses on learning outcomes and/or the environment supporting student learning and (2) accomplishes the mission of the institution.*

The QEP topic is highly significant, focusing on three of the most important skills that students can develop in college: writing, critical thinking, and information literacy. It also integrates those three skills in logical ways, with a culminating goal of increasing participation in undergraduate scholarship, a high-impact practice.

The QEP promotes and measures student learning in multiple ways throughout every undergraduate program. It is based in assessment of student learning outcomes from Composition II (a course that is taken at FGCU by over 90% of first-year students) and several programs’ senior capstone projects.

The QEP is well suited to the mission and current strategic plan of FGCU, which emphasize innovative teaching and learning, academic excellence, and learner-centered education. In supporting students’ writing, critical thinking, and information literacy, the QEP centers on the very skills students need for success, both during their undergraduate studies and for their post-baccalaureate plans. FGCU’s universal senior-capstone requirement, established in the institution’s founding documents, is an important part of the institution’s identity and goal of academic excellence; it is also the keystone of the QEP, as both the coming-together of students’ scholarly skills at the culmination of their undergraduate careers and a valuable opportunity for measuring the growth of students’ academic and scholarly skills.

3. **Institutional Capability for the Initiation, Implementation, and Completion of the Plan.** *The institution provides evidence that it has sufficient resources to initiate, implement, sustain, and complete the QEP.*

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee analyzed the capability of the institution to initiate, implement, and complete the proposed QEP, and summarily feels as if the institution sufficiently meets each of these. The institution has appropriated the following funds in Year 0 through Year 5, respectively; \$168,500, \$655,000,

\$769,500, \$804,500, \$794,500 and \$783,500. The University exhibits that sufficient additions to the faculty, administration, and other resources are being made available. Moreover, the University, in its first 5 years of the QEP is budgeting a total of \$3,975,500 for the initiative. It is also the summary opinion of the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee that the funds slated to be appropriated can offer a reasonable degree of long term sustainability to the initiative. In addition, the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee concluded the organization structure and proposed implementation timeline to be appropriate.

4. **Broad-based Involvement of Institutional Constituencies.** *The institution demonstrates the involvement of its constituencies in the development and proposed implementation of the Plan.*

Broad-based involvement of faculty, staff, administrators and students from all across the university was used in developing the QEP. FGCU initially created a QEP Selection Committee of 10 faculty, staff, administrators and students to identify the QEP topic. Then the initial call for topics went out to all faculty, staff and students.

FGCU next appointed a QEP Steering Committee with representation from the Faculty Senate, the Staff Advisory Council, Student Government, the Deans Council, the Assessment Council, the Office of Undergraduate Studies, and university Department Chairs. All five colleges and the library were represented on this committee. Leaders with the Student Government also attended the meetings of the Committee.

Three working groups of Steering Committee members and other university specialists defined best practices and scholarship for the three skill areas. Multiple forums that were well attended were held on campus to elicit feedback from faculty, staff and students about the topics and the final plan. Finally a survey of all undergraduate program leaders was conducted to ascertain the campus definitions of the three skills and how and where scholarship was taught and assessed. This information was included in the final plan.

5. **Assessment of the Plan.** *The institution identifies goals and a plan to assess the achievement of those goals.*

In the QEP document, *FGCU Scholars: Think, Write, Discover*, there are program objectives and learning goals. The program objectives have fairly clear assessment measures (methods) and quantitative targets with dates that are presented right up front in the document. However, the same is not true for the learning goals. For the learning goals, assessment measures, targets and dates for assessment are found in different places throughout the chapter making it difficult to clearly ascertain what the actual assessment plan is.

Prior to the site visit, FGCU created a series of assessment tables that more clearly presented the assessment targets for the various QEP program objectives and learning goals. Onsite, FGCU presented additional documents that further defined the assessment of the QEP entitled *Timelines and Definitions, Program Goals Timeline*, and *Learning Outcomes*. The latter document showed very specific outcome measurements for each of the five years and each of three measurements, the Composition II average score, the Capstone average score

and the difference score. The plan for assessing the QEP becomes clear with these final documents.

C. Analysis and Comments for Strengthening the QEP

FGCU has created a laudable QEP with significant goals that will benefit students in myriad ways. It will promote student success in several areas, will likely help further improve retention, and will prepare students for post-baccalaureate demands, including graduate/professional school and/or careers in a diversity of fields.

The QEP has already promoted—and will continue to inspire—highly valuable conversations about curriculum and pedagogy within and across academic programs. In those open and collegial conversations about different epistemologies and modes of scholarship across the academy, FGCU has a great deal to teach other institutions of higher education.

Utilizing and building on the AAC&U's VALUE rubrics is one of the best practices on which the QEP is founded. The evidence-based practices of writing, critical thinking, and information literacy discussed in the QEP show an outstanding use of the literature and of innovative pedagogies. The integration of three VALUE rubrics into an institution-specific and QEP-specific rubric (measuring writing, critical thinking, and information literacy) will not only facilitate useful assessment of FGCU's QEP and student learning, but would also make a valuable contribution to the literature on undergraduate scholarship and skills-centered curricula.

Comments for Strengthening the QEP:

The institution might consider creating curriculum maps (as opposed to student degree audits) of several programs' plans for the QEP. It would be helpful within and beyond the institution to see a visual representation of where in various curricula students will work toward particular learning outcomes.

Because a great deal of the QEP is dependent on adjunct faculty teaching Composition II, the institution could offer professional development opportunities for part-time/adjunct faculty that are accessible (in terms of times of day and multiple offerings) and incentivized (e.g., \$100/day for pre-semester workshops for part-time faculty). FGCU could also encourage more full-time faculty to teach Composition II, as the course is crucial to the QEP and to overall student learning outcomes across the disciplines.

Funding for undergraduate scholarship (for supplies, conference travel, and summer work) is located in several different "pockets" that faculty have only limited knowledge of. Students applying for funding to present at professional conferences often patch together funding from three or more programs' budgets, a process that is both inefficient and potentially unfair. The QEP Lead wonders whether the most self-confident and favored students will be the ones to secure financial support for their scholarly work. The institution could institute methods of clearer communication to students and faculty about opportunities for undergraduate scholarship and, especially, for funding for research supplies, student travel to conferences, and grants for summer/co-curricular, faculty-mentored undergraduate scholarship. Clear communication and centralized application processes promote equitable access to funding and improve efficiency.

Part IV. Third-Party Comments

To be completed by the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

If an institution receives Third-Party Comments, the institution has an opportunity to respond to those comments and the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviews the response as part of its comprehensive evaluation of the institution.

The Committee should check one of the following:

No Third-Party Comments submitted.

Third-Party Comments submitted. (**Address the items below.**)

1. Describe the nature of the Comments and any allegations of non-compliance that may have been part of the formal Third-Party Comments;

2. Indicate whether the Committee found evidence in support of any allegations of non-compliance.

If found to be out of compliance, the Committee should write a recommendation and include it in Part II under the standard cited with a full narrative that describes why the institution was found to be out of compliance and the documentation that supports that determination. In this space, reference the number of the Core Requirement, Comprehensive Standard, or Federal Requirement and the recommendation number cited in Part II.

If determined to be in compliance, explain in this space the reasons and refer to the documentation in support of this finding.

APPENDIX A

Roster of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee	Roster of the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee
<p>Dr. Dianne L. Barron - CHAIR Associate Provost/Dean of the Graduate School Troy University Troy, Alabama</p> <p>Ms. Elizabeth Cantrell Director of Assessment and Accreditation University of North Georgia Dahlonega, Georgia</p> <p>Dr. Thomas E. Conway Vice Chancellor and Chief of Staff Fayetteville State University Fayetteville, North Carolina</p> <p>Dr. Joe G. Delap Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate School Jacksonville State University Jacksonville, Alabama</p> <p>Ms. Sarah B. Watstein University Librarian University of North Carolina – Wilmington Wilmington, North Carolina</p> <p>Mr. John F. Knight * Assistant Vice President for Finance James Madison University Harrisonburg, Virginia</p> <p>Dr. William J. McKinney President Valdosta State University Valdosta, Georgia</p> <p>Dr. Hilda Silva Vice President of Student Affairs University of Texas at Brownsville – Texas Southmost College Brownsville, Texas</p> <p>Dr. Julio F. Turrens Associate Dean Pat Capps Covey College of Allied Health Professions University of South Alabama Mobile, Alabama</p> <p><u>SACSCOC Staff Coordinator</u> Dr. Nuria M. Cuevas Vice President SACS Commission on Colleges Decatur, Georgia</p>	<p>Dr. Charles D. Whitlock - CHAIR President Emeritus Eastern Kentucky University Richmond, Kentucky</p> <p>Dr. John L. Crain President Southeastern Louisiana University Hammond, Louisiana</p> <p>Dr. Pamela H. Elfenbein Dept. Head & Professor, Sociology & Human Services University of North Georgia Dahlonega, Georgia</p> <p>Dr. Robert L. Hodum Associate VP, Enrollment Management & Student Success Tennessee Tech University Cookeville, Tennessee</p> <p>Dr. Ann L. McCann Director of Planning and Assessment Texas A&M University Dallas, Texas</p> <p>Dr. Joseph "Jay" A. Morgan Provost & VP, Academic Affairs Murray State University Murray, Kentucky</p> <p>Jenny Shanahan, Ph.D. Director of Undergraduate Research Bridgewater State University Bridgewater, Massachusetts</p> <p><u>Observer</u> Nourredine Bouubekri, Ph.D. Professor and Director of Engineering University of North Texas Denton, Texas</p> <p><u>SACSCOC Staff Coordinator</u> Dr. Nuria M. Cuevas Vice President SACS Commission on Colleges Decatur, Georgia</p>

APPENDIX B

Off-Campus Sites or Distance Learning Programs Reviewed

Florida Gulf Coast University operates no off-campus sites.

Distance learning programs were found to be appropriately addressed in all applicable Core Requirements, Comprehensive Standards, and Federal Requirements.

APPENDIX C

List of Recommendations Cited in the Report of the Reaffirmation Committee

The Reaffirmation Committee did not write any recommendations. Accordingly, this Report of the Reaffirmation Committee contains no recommendations.